

move came from the board of directors of Consulting Engineers Council (CEC) meeting last week aboard a Bermuda cruise ship. On the report that ASCE had deleted its Article 3, CEC deleted one word from its own code's Article 7. This article said it "promotes the principle of selection of consulting engineers for assignments only on the basis of qualifications . . ." The word "only" came out. Further, CEC suspended its guides to professional practice, which explain how to abide by the code of ethics, and appointed a high-level committee to conduct a thorough review of the guides.

**Floodgates to open?** Principal reaction to ASCE's move is concern over what each engineer will decide to do about inviting or submitting priced proposals. One engineer said last week "the floodgates will be open" for a flow of projects on which consulting firms will be asked to submit priced proposals. Consulting engineers also voiced concern that some of their number would willingly submit bids for professional engagement if invited.

Removal of ASCE's prohibition against bidding does not mean consultants individually may not refuse to submit bids. It means rather that they can't cite ASCE's code as their reason for refusal. Neither, of course, can there legally be any agreement among engineers to refuse to submit bids.

The ASCE position that bidding is unethical has rested on the contention that it is not in the best public interest to select professionals on other bases than competence. It is expected that the society will continue to argue that price competitions for professional services are false economy and contrary to the public interest.

**"Good citizen" efforts.** Oscar S. Bray started his term as ASCE's 103rd president (see cover story, p. 16) with an inaugural statement of his views on problems facing both society and the civil engineering profession, at the society's annual meeting.

"ASCE has been subject to pressures from many directions to take stands on these [political and social] issues, some from . . . those seeking the power and prestige of a great society to advance objectives of their own," he said. "In my view ASCE can and should take a strong public position on any issue affecting engineers as a group or relating to matters in which the expertise peculiar to our profession is of value.

"I assure you that ASCE will make itself heard in these areas," Bray said.

## GSA moves on two new fronts to speed work on federal building projects

The federal government is moving fast to start work on its first major systems-built offices project. At the same time, Congress is carefully studying Administration-backed proposals that seek authority needed to accelerate federal construction projects that may include a new multimillion-dollar sports and convention center in Washington, D.C.

Less than two weeks after receiving preliminary proposals for construction manager (CM) services for its \$70-million Social Security system project (ENR 10/21 p. 19), the General Services Administration (GSA) has narrowed its field to six candidates. They will now submit priced proposals from which GSA is expected to name a winner early next week.

The finalists, four of which were in the final running for GSA's first CM contract for the Beltsville project, are: Tishman Realty & Construction Co., New York City; Morrison-Knudsen Co., Inc., Boise, Idaho; Turner Construction Co., New York City, in association with MDC Systems, Inc., Cherry Hill, N.J.; Lester B. Knight & Assoc., Inc., Chicago, in association with George A. Fuller Co., New York City; Catalytic, Inc., Philadelphia, and Ralph M. Parsons Co., Los Angeles, in association with Robert E. McKee, Inc., El Paso, Tex., and Charles Luckman Associates, Los Angeles. All contractors involved in these proposals are among the top 50 companies in the country in contract volume last year.

**Adding to the package?** To its legislative effort to accelerate federal construction through new financing techniques (ENR 10/7 p. 14), GSA is reportedly trying to gain authority for construction of the \$90-million sports and convention center. The tentative plan is to tack this authority onto pending proposals before Senate and House subcommittees that would authorize GSA to enter into lease-purchase contracts for about \$1 billion in federal construction and develop a revolving fund to aid in financing future building projects.

Late last week, the House public works subcommittee on public buildings, currently studying these proposals, requested that GSA come up with details on the center before November. For years by Washington civic and municipal leaders, would reportedly be

built at Mount Vernon Square, about halfway between the White House and Capitol Hill.

While some congressmen fear that the sports center plan might jeopardize approval of GSA's proposed financing techniques, these are likely, in any case, to be modified in bills that finally emerge from committee.

Basically, GSA's two-prong approach to accelerating construction is to get temporary authority to construct about 63 government buildings already authorized by Congress by having private developers finance and build the project with lease payments by GSA going towards ultimate purchase of the structures. At the same time, GSA wants authority to collect rents from government agencies occupying federal office space. This money would be funneled into a revolving fund that would be used to pay off the leases and to finance future building.

While many congressmen agree that GSA should have more flexibility meeting government building needs, both financing proposals have detractors.

Lease-purchase agreements have been in disfavor because of their tendency to increase the cost of the project over the long-run as the developer translates its profit, taxes and interest costs into payments made by the government. Additionally, the revolving fund draws criticism because, as a sort of trust fund, congressional control over its allocations would be reduced.

As a result, House and Senate committee members have proposed amendments that would permit creation of the revolving fund but with certain restrictions. One House amendment proposes that GSA return to Congress for approval of funds for any authorized project where costs increase by \$500,000 or more above original estimates. A similar Senate amendment proposes that GSA return to Congress for approval to proceed if construction costs increase by 10% or more per year.

Even if final bills emerge from committee containing such restrictions, GSA is expected to push for approval in light of its huge backlog of construction. GSA officials contend that with recent congressional appropriations averaging about \$115 million each fiscal year, it work off such a backlog while at the same time meeting new building needs.